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ABSTRACT

A study examined (1) a nine-year-old girl's view of writing, (2) the factors contributing to the construction of that view, (3) her parents' and teacher's views, and (4) the relationship among these various views. Both samples of writing and an interview schedule were used to elicit writing views from each of the participants concerning their notions relating to writing. In addition, participants were asked to recall their memories of learning to write. Results indicated that there were considerable differences between not only what the child did at school and at home in terms of writing, but also how the child perceived and accounted for those differences. The parents were able to offer useful insights that contributed to a developmental view of writing from the perspective of a progression on a continuum. The teacher, also, shared in considerable detail the practices and rationale that guided the writing process in her classroom. Overall, the study revealed interesting differences between the home and school contexts in which writing occurred. (A final section of the paper examines the researcher's perspective and the limitations inherent in the framework used to analyze the interview data. Implications for further research are also presented. Thirteen references are included.) (Author/FL)

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THREE VIEWS OF WRITING:

PERCEPTIONS OF A CHILD, HER PARENTS AND HER TEACHER

by

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Absract

Douglas Barnes' contends that "school for every child is a confrontation between what he knows already and what the school offers" while James Britton speaking of the notion of a world representation suggests that people's constructions of experience, constitute "a view of the world". The present study examines a small slice of that world view, namely a view of the writing process. The perceptions of writing of a young child (aged nine years), and the respective views of her parents and teacher are described in an attempt to appreciate the relationships that exist among these three world views of experience. Both samples of writing and an interview schedule are employed to elicit a view of writing from each of the participants. Notions relating to writing such as kinds, audience, purposes, content, context, attendant knowledge and skills and early memories of learning to write are sampled. Results of the study indicate that there are considerable differences between not only what the child does at school and at home in terms of writing, but also how the child perceives and accounts for these differences. The parents are able to offer useful insights that contribute to a developmental view of writing from the perspective of a progression on a continuum while the teacher shares, in considerable detail, the practices and rationale that guide the writing process in the classroom. There are interesting differences between the home and school contexts in which writing occurs. A final

section of the paper examines the the researcher's perspective and the limitations inherent in the framework used to analyze the interview data. Implications for further research are presented.

1. INTRODUCTION

Douglas Barnes' (1975) contention that "school for every child is a confrontation between what he knows already and what the school offers" (pp. 22), seems to be a useful starting point for inquiry. James Britton (1970), speaking of the notion of a world representation suggests that people's constructions of experience, that is the sense that is made of what is experienced, constitutes what he calls "a view of the world" (pp. 32).

The child might or might not possess some knowledges that are consistent with that which is available at or appreciated by the school. The extent to which these two knowledges, school and other, are compatible or incongruent will affect the child's world view in some way. The view then may be complemented and remain static, or may be changed in some direction.

This study proposes to examine a small slice of that world view, namely a view of the writing process. What is a young child's (aged nine years) view of writing? What has contributed to this construction? What are the child's parents' and teacher's respective views? What are the relationships among these three world views of experience?

Investigation of these questions is important for several reasons. A contemporary assumption is that professionals have much to teach children and parents. The notion that educators can learn from talking to children, parents and teachers may be worthy of consideration.

Insights may be gained that in some way contribute to deeper understanding of the nature of the parent-teacher-child relationship. Involvement in this collaborative relationship may help to determine the extent to which home and school can or should be more alike for children, remembering that the ultimate goal is growth and development of the individual child.

Both parents and teachers exert a profound influence upon the development of young children. Since experimentation is an important aspect in the acquisition of written language, it may be that aware adults will focus on activities that permit and promote language development. What adults do in terms of modelling, intervention and support may have an effect on the way that the child comes to view writing.

2. CONTEXTS AND PERSPECTIVES

2.1 World View and Personal Agendae

If an hypothetical writing curriculum is examined, certain philosophical positions, recommended practices, strategies and so on are likely to be found. The implementation of the curriculum and its intentions revolve to a large extent around the classroom teacher. World views being what they are, or people behaving as they do, the teacher may redefine, from a personal perspective, what is to be implemented and will thus give clues as to what that teacher considers to be important about the process or the products of writing. The teacher's view and subsequent actions in practice may be factors that either enable or disable a child's understanding of that which is being taught. At the same time, the child's world view or the experiences he or she has brought to the

learning at hand must be taken into account. What the child demonstrates as understanding then, will be to some degree a function of the complementary or confrontational nature of these two views.

While in the home, there is not likely to be an overt written curriculum for writing, there may exist a covert or tacit agenda, that if articulated, might reveal some or all of the elements common to a piece of written school curriculum, that is philosophical position, strategies, evaluation and so on. The parents, operating in and on their view will have defined what the process of writing is, what might be done about it and how it might be done. Parent understandings and practices then are factors contributing to the child's world view.

The relationships among these three views of a common process, that of writing, are intriguing especially since Garman (1986) indicates that both parents and teachers (and possibly children too) are continually making decisions about how individuals learn such and such as well as what is to be considered as significant information to which the learner must attend. They are not operating in a neutral posture.

2.2 Participants

The subjects are a nine year old child, Erin, her parents, Pat and Rick, and her classroom teacher, Mrs. Fair. The family lives near a small rural community; Mrs. Fair teaches a grade four class in a country school. The question of world view is made even more fascinating by the fact that the child had not attended school until the latter part of the previous school year but had instead been schooled at home in a manner her parents had determined to be most appropriate. This was not a decision that was

made lightly or treated capriciously by them. Indications are that while they did not actively "teach" Erin, they nevertheless assumed in the very best sense, the role of facilitator and mediator of Erin's "learning".

3. METHOD

Separate interviews were conducted with Erin, her parents and her teacher. Each participant was interviewed twice. As it eventuated the pragmatics of scheduling the teacher's time, the availability of both parents and the capriciousness of a young child, all contributed to the interview being broken into two sessions. That the conversations took place over a period of time was fortuitous as it allowed all participants, including the researcher, to become comfortable with each other and the line of inquiry. The meetings took place between November 10 and December 2.

Discovering a person's views is of course, not as simple a task as asking directly what they might be. It is equally apparent that if material gained from conversations is to be of any value, then interviews need to be constructed with care and conducted with discretion. It would also seem that if ideas or notions derived from interview data are to be viewed as legitimate, then some method of verification needs to be considered.

An interview schedule was constructed that attempted to elicit a view of writing from each of the participants by asking similar sorts of questions. The questions followed a general guideline used by Hudson (1985). Notions related to writing such as kinds, audience, purposes, content, context, preferences and attendant knowledge and skills were

sampled. One intriguing question asked each participant to reconstruct early memories of learning to write.

An admitted difficulty in writing research is that inferences made on the basis of written products alone do not provide sufficient insight into what the child is doing or and in particular thinking about written composition. However it seems that in this context, examination of written samples that involve the child's judgements may be a way to elicit useful information about perceptions of writing.

The child was asked to choose several pieces of her own writing done at home or school and with which she was particularly pleased. To this selection were added some additional samples of writing done by other children, aged five to eight years. Selected pieces from this combined sample of fifteen were examined by the child, the parents and the teacher.

The child was asked to explain her choices and comment on each piece, concerning features, content, reasons, form and other details. What the child felt she still needed to learn to become a better writer as well as her impressions of some writing done by other children were asked.

The parents and the teacher were each asked to comment on the writing samples, attending to the writer's ability and proficiency and to those things that the writer still needed to master in order to improve. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed.

4. EVENTS, ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

It is perhaps difficult to give an account or description without at the same time beginning to speculate somewhat about the nature and reasons for those events. It is equally difficult to determine whether

the child's view ought to be described and presented as a function of adult perceptions or to describe the ways in which adult perceptions have informed the child's view. It seems that there are subtle distinctions to be appreciated here in this decision.

Since this study has as its main referent a child perspective, the latter method of analysis seems more appropriate. Therefore, Erin's view of writing will be presented first. The views of the parents and the teacher will be given in subsequent sections.

4.1 Erin's View

Erin's account of her views on writing is rich and full. It is interesting to note the ease with which she begins to be involved in offering her account. She begins in response to questions about writing at school. Erin indicates that while there is some variety in the kinds of things that are done, story writing is the first kind mentioned. She says:

> We do a writing folder that we keep stories in. First we copy them and then we do a good copy and we did booklets too.

She already has an idea that there are distinctions to be made even among story writing practice when she indicates that the writing folder:

> Has two little folded up things. On one side we put our practice copy and on the other side our good copy.

Not only are there distinctions to be made among practice, there is some evidence to suggest that executive decisions are being made. The

child may do the writing, but the teacher does the editing. Then the child rewrites. Erin says:

> We write the practice all by ourselves and then my teacher corrects it and then we do the good copy with the corrections.

This seems to be, as will become more evident, a consistent practice germane to all forms of writing in the classroom and carries with it several possible messages for a child author. The first is that for writing to be good, it must be written several times. This notion can be a powerful deterrent to beginning writers who are just coming to terms with or struggling with a process as complex and abstract as that of writing.

A second message is that when the the teacher does the correcting, there exists the possibility that what the child already knows about writing is not fully appreciated. The teacher essentially becomes the source of all legitimate knowledge about writing. The use of an external standard against which children's efforts are measured is one then that must be approached with sensitivity and delicacy.

The origin of topics seems at first mention to be a combination of pupil and teacher ideas when Erin states:

> See they just give us a subject, a topic and then we just do something. And other than that, I decide myself.

When asked if there were other kinds of writing that were being done at school, Erin offers the interesting reply:

Not yet.

It is almost as if she expects that there will be something more substantial to writing, either in terms of process or product.

In a preliminary discussion of writing at home, Erin distinguishes it from school writing when she indicates that home is a more productive source of ideas. She says:

> Well, one of the things that I sometimes have here is that I get so many ideas and then it's hard to write.

Not only are the ideas at home child-initiated, but they are also in such abundance that Erin seemingly has the luxury to seize any one of them and write or to discard the lot. The decision rests with her. She says:

> Sometimes I write them and sometimes I forget.

When Erin is asked what sorts of writing she has at home she immeditely begins to speak of her efforts in terms of story writing. Other things that she might do that are not stories, Erin lumps together in one category:

> They're poster things.

This is curious comment in itself because a glimpse around Erin's house reveals an enormous amount of bits of her writing on display. Some

are taped to the refrigerator; other bits are pinned to doors. The bulletin board beside the telephone is covered and all of these pieces of writing bear little resemblance to what might be defined as story writing from an adult perspective. In addition, while Erin indicates in later conversations and demonstates in her selection of samples, a considerable variety of writing forms, she nevertheless speaks of writing as restricted to story.

Erin spends some time discussing the sources of ideas and her preferences for types of writing. She is an avid reader and the influence of this interest is apparent when she states:

> Well, sometimes when I read a book I get an idea and sometimes I just think them up myself in my imagination.

Erin further indicates:

> Sometimes I think of a story in a book and then I use the characters and do a story. Sometimes I make up my own.

She expresses a preference for writing what she terms "fantasy stories". She indicates that not only is it her favourite kind of writing, but it is also easier to do. This is an interesting comment in that it begins to point to some discrepancies between what Erin does and what might be predicted by some current theories of writing development. Both James Britton (1970) and James Moffet (1985) present models that characterize young writers as somewhat restricted in their capabilities. Young children are generally viewed as writing in the expressive narrative mode, mainly about present events. Yet Erin has a very clear idea of the

direction in which she wants her writing to go and it is not down the road of narrative.

The discussion moves on to talking about what might constitute "real" writing . Erin admits that it is not one of her strengths:

> Sometimes, but I usually don't get too far. At least not at home.

The sorts of real things that are written about at school are described in this manner:

> Yea, in language arts we read books. Once we did a unit on dogs. We had activity cards and we looked up stuff and then we wrote it in our notebooks.

However, real writing for Erin is that which has characters. She says:

> I write about all kinds of stuff. Well, mostly I guess I like doing people stories but sometimes thay have animals and I like cat things too. It seems to me they can do more if it's real.

When asked if there was one type of writing that was done most often, Erin responds with what seems to be wisdom beyond her years, wisdom plainly obvious to a nine year old but not so apparent to an adult. She indicates that variety is dependent on idea and that form then follows the purpose of the writing:

I think it varies a lot. Whatever my idea is and I just sort of do different things all the time.

In a discussion of the writing done by her parents and her teacher, Erin indicates that they do much different things. When mum and dad write it is:

Mostly when they're planning things, for the garden or whatever. Or they're writing letters to people.

What the teacher does is described as follows:

All I've ever seen her do is correct our work. I guess on the blackboard.

It is clear that the nature of the role model presented by the parents and by the teacher are perceived differently by Erin. While she indicates initially that the teacher does no writng whatsoever, it may be that reasons for adult writing in classrooms differ from those reasons at home and that Erin is not yet appreciative of that consideration.

Erin begins to offer her further insights into teacher practice when the conversation enters into what goes on in school when the children are writing. That the teacher is not an active writer when Erin is working is confirmed by her observation:

Well, usually we've handed in some stuff earlier in the day and that's what she does - corrects it.

The following is expected of those who may be experiencing difficulty with their writing. Erin indicates:

We just put up our hand and it depends. If she doesn't have much to correct, she comes around. You put up your hand if you need some help.

The notion of the teacher as the source of exclusive knowledge about writing and the idea that children can become independent writers seem at odds with each other. Creating a dependence on a single source for help or legitimizing the idea of an external standard may be detrimental or counter-productive to the notion of a developmental view of writing. Erin indicates that the teacher expects children to refrain from interaction with each other while they are writing. She says:

Not very much, because we're not - supposed to do our own work. Do your own work. You're just supposed to ask the teacher.

And if the teacher is busy, the protocol remains the same:

Just put up my hand and wait.

When asked if she or any of the other children went ahead and attempted to sort out their difficulties, trying spellings and so on, Erin indicated that it was infrequent. When the subsequent writing was corrected, the teacher made no mention of spelling attempts but simply corrected errors.

In response to the question of whether she considered herself to be a good writer, Erin replies with another fundamental insight. Not only does interest determine what is produced, but ownership of the piece of writing is also very important to her. She observes:

> It depends really whether I'm interested. If I am interested I can do a better job. If I'm not, then I can't do such a good job sometimes.

Erin also offers some initial criteria for judging writing and writers when she says:

> I guess if you have lots of stuff written. Yea, that's one and my teacher says if you spell good.

For whatever reasons Erin found it difficult to answer three questions. Those to which she gave no replies were left with her to answer in writing. Perhaps she might have needed more time to consider a reply than was given during the discussion or she may have just been tired from working through the interview .

Referring to necessary knowledge that children should have to help them write, Erin describes mechanical criteria. Correct presentation is seen as important; symbols, structure and spelling are needed. She indicates:

> They should know how to recognize the alphabet and be able to build a good structured sentence.

An early memory of learning to write indicates a changing view that seems to differentiate writing at home and writing at school when she recalls:

> I remember that I used not to be as anxious to spell the right way as I was to get my ideas down.

Erin was asked to choose several pieces of her own writing that along with some pieces supplied by the researcher would form the basis of further discussion about various aspects of writing. If, at this point, it seems that a description of Erin's account is perhaps becoming rather lengthy, the reasons are legitimate. Since this is a study of a child's view of writing and since access to information from the child was restricted to only two occasions it is incumbent upon the researcher to provide as complete a description as can be assumed that Erin would have intended. The researcher is also obliged to provide as much context as possible to allow the reader access to an informed perspective from which to view the subsequent accounts of parents' and teacher's perceptions.

Erin selected twelve pieces of her writing. All were done at home. If the samples are examined to determine the kinds of writing that are represented in the sample, the results are intriguing. The selection contains no stories but instead includes:

1. A descriptive piece of informational writing about outer space.
2. A newspaper article in a newspaper format.
3. A book of jokes.
4. A thank you letter to grandparents.
5. A board game with instructions and consequences.
6. A chart showing birthdays of family and friends.
7. A graph depicting ages of family and friends.
8. A graph displaying favourite colours of family and friends.
9. Details of a proposed sleepover party.
10. An announcement about a flower contest with rules and prizes.
11. A poem celebrating spring.

12. A poem following a particular format.

It seems odd that while Erin characterizes writing as that which resembles story, she chooses everything but stories! It is equally interesting that eleven of the bits of writing had accompanying illustrations. For some young children then, it may be that as much message is conveyed in picture as is intended in print. As well, a unique form is chosen for each piece of her writing, indicating that Erin is quite aware of the fact that function often determines format.

The several pieces of other writing supplied by the researcher included two small books that told a story, one descriptive bit of writing and two attempts at beginning writing by five year olds that resembled scribble.

Erin discusses at length the source of ideas that have given rise to her writing. A real newspaper prompted the articles, while other books were the source of the jokes. The flower contest rules and prizes originated from watching television at her grandma's. The poem that followed a specific format resulted from instruction at school while the spring poem was inspired by the coming season and complemented a total concept. Erin explains:

> That was when it was first coming to be spring and I had some books with flowers and stuff and information on my window sill and some bouquets and stuff.

When she discusses the writing of several other children she indicates that her criteria for appreciating them, unlike the presentational correctness to which she referred earlier, are functional

and pragmatic. The writer's message is most important. When asked what knowledge one of the other young authors still needed she replies:

> Well, space in between her words and I guess the sound of letters a bit more cause I can't really read it! I think he still needs to separate his words too.

Erin insists that spelling is not and in fact shouldn't be an issue when she examines another bit of writing. She observes about the importance of spelling:

> No, not at the start. Cause you can read it when they're (children) little and if you learn it when you get older that's just fine. That's the way I started.

More than anything else, Erin seems to be quite aware of her own capabilities and can even offer insight into her own development as a writer. She recalls:

> I did make some mistakes, but I just corrected them and that's okay then. It's fine. That's the way I started. See, if I wanted the sound of a long vowel, I used to put two. To write a name like Kate or something, I put "K" and then two "As" and then a "T". That's the way I used to write.

And as if coming to terms with her own writing abilities is not sufficient, Erin looks forward to unravelling some of the mysteries of writing that are just beyond her grasp. Drawing on her extensive reading experiences and speculating on the nature of description and detail in stories, she remains intrigued by the process and the possibilities of knowing more. She muses:

> Well, one thing that I'd like (to know) that would be fun to do is what I always wonder - how people manage to write such a long story?

She will likely not have to wait long for an answer!

4.2 The Parents' View

The parents' initial impressions are that very little, from their perspective, is happening at school with regard to writing. Pat, Erin's mother, comments in response to a question about writing at school:

> Not very much. I read a couple of things when I was in there and there was nothing completed.

Erin's father Rick mentions that the writing that Pat is referring to is a daily journal that Erin is keeping. It is odd that Erin did not mention this kind of school writing in any of the conversations with the researcher. More details about the nature of this particular type of writing are given by the parents. There is one striking distinction to be made about journal writing that differentiates it from the sorts of daily writing that Erin engaged in last year. Pat indicates that:

> There are no pictures allowed in the journal. What I have heard from Erin is that the diary that she kept last year - she's not allowed to put pictures in it.

There are some implications for this kind of teacher practice. First, restricting modes of communication can place serious constraints upon beginning writers who are continually involved in the active construction of knowledge about writing. Second any practice that limits

children to a single kind of discourse form may not fully appreciate the integrity and diversity of the beginning writer. Finally while it is true that children as young as three years are capable of distinguishing their drawings from their print, it may be that facility in writing is enhanced when a variety of forms are attempted simultaneously. That Pat considers drawing and writing to be complementary processes and equally important to Erin's development is illustrated when she observes:

> It was a big part to her, because the pictures are still the better way of expressing herself I think. Again it was a really nice picture and a page or two of something that she had written as well.

Development of story for Erin takes the form of:

> Embellishment is still the biggest part of it. She starts with the cover, the title for the story and a big picture and then she tries to write the story afterwards from it.

It seems though, that there is in fact something going on at school in terms of written work. Pat characterizes it as being for presentation with an emphasis on mechanics. Her emerging definition of writing is one that incorporates a number of aspects, both process and product. She states:

> Well, definitely more writing this year. More writing - more stuff in notebooks - everything's written in cursive writing, properly and neatly and that's a fairly stressed skill. Like when they do their science - written sentences with the answers on it - definitely more written stuff! As far as story writing, I have only seen one or two things started.

When asked about the things that Erin is doing at home, Pat and Rick describe a variety of forms that differ from the things that were identified by the child. They begin to list starting with a major distinction:

> Well, the majority of it probably isn't story writing. Now, on the other hand she's done tons of questionnaires for us to fill out and posters and signs, invitations, things like that. That's always been something we get reams and reams of. Letters, she writes a little bit of that. A few notes of thanks and the envelopes she fills out. A couple of times a month she gets the typewriter out. And sometimes she gets a book on flowers (for example) and then writes some stuff. I wouldn't call it story, describing parts of a flower. Information, yea! I would say she has sometimes a page or so on that. Lists, she likes lists a lot. Lists are big with her.

Erin's parents are very perceptive and as a result of their keen observations are able to offer useful insights that contribute to a developmental view of writing from the perspective of progression on a continuum. They describe Erin's present writing efforts as:

> An extension of what she was doing. Just a progression of the same.

Pat and Rick offer a delightful and very telling account of Erin's developing system for organizing knowledge about writing. They observe:

> It was lists and posters and stuff right from the start. She was copying things too- bits of stories, words. She copied things for a while, but recall when she totally invented her spelling and stuff - just the thrill of being able to go sit down by herself and write something that we could then decipher as being something in English. That was pretty neat for her and she spent a long time with that. She defined her own set of rules. At one point, she would - any letter that sounded like

it in a word - you put two of them down. For example,"great" - you'd hear "A", she'd put two "A"s - or even a consonant, she'd do that too, almost for emphasis. If it was "empty", she'd put two "T"s at the end. It was a tremendously logical thing but totally her own. That (stage) just kind of slowly got better and then there was a very short time when it was mostly correct but just spelling mistakes. It went very quickly from totally her own way to pretty well the right way, the proper spelling. It came suddenly. I guess it came with reading - I don't know.

Pat shows considerable appreciation of child development with an initial comment that distinguishes exploratory ideas and presentational skills in writing. It is clear that she has already reflected on the sorts of initial learnings that Erin demonstrates and that she has come to understand the meanings of what might be otherwise considered as puzzling. Pat speaks of Erin's frustration in a manner reminiscent of Schon's (1983) "giving the child reason" (pp. 68) when she offers:

We were talking about writing before you came in and immediately Erin went to the story writing side of it and she said she is frustrated because she has more ideas than she can get down. I think that is something that is pretty much to be expected isn't it? Their skill with pen in hand is definitely lagging. It's the same as understanding what thoughts are there.

At this point the discussion begins to focus on the relationship that might exist between spelling and reading. It has been mentioned earlier that Erin has a voracious literary appetite and Pat observes that there was a period of about six months when Erin still spelled using her unique system but was able to recognize correct spellings in books. This is a fascinating situation because the question now becomes one of what it was that moved Erin in the direction of correct spelling? It could not have been teacher instruction because she was not attending school at that

time. Nor could it have been direct parent intervention because the parent practice is to supply words only when they are requested. Pat offers a tentative explanation:

> No, there was a time that she could read that she still wrote her own way, definitely. During that time she didn't make any attempt at spelling things the right way and didn't have any self-consciousness about it. Maybe it was when other people started seeing it? I'm not sure.

Rick explains that at that time Erin may not have been aware that her spelling was not conventional or at least she may not have yet appreciated the necessity of conventions. He states:

> I'm not sure if she really identified with it being right or wrong at that stage.

The distinction between what might be called an external standard and a convention is subtle and may really be a function of the way in which a child's efforts are perceived. External standard seems to imply a skill orientation and knowing how to do the job correctly, while convention implies understanding and learning why the job must be done correctly. The distinction may simply be the extent to which children's efforts are valued and accepted.

The parents show considerable sensitivity toward Erin's spelling efforts. They suggest that learning how to spell may in some way be connected to the notion of audience. While they, like a teacher, have the option to "teach" correct spelling at any time, they nevertheless allow Erin to gradually realize and develop this knowledge. Pat observes:

> Maybe it was when other people started seeing it. I guess she was reading before she realized that what she did was different.

Rick mentions:

> I think she knew sometimes her spellings were different but I don't think she necessarily knew they were right or wrong.

Realizing conventions causes a shift in Erin's understanding. Again as Schon (1983) would quickly concur, this shift in understanding results in a change in practice. "The unique and uncertain situation comes to be understood through the attempt to change it and changed through the attempt to understand it" (pp. 132). Pat recalls:

> At some point she realized that (they were right or wrong) and it was very quick before she wrote. She would start then at that point - "How do you spell?" - something she never did at the start - never asked "How do you spell?".

An approach then, such as the parents have, in which child-organized and created text are appreciated and encouraged, may contribute significantly to an awareness of the written language system. Many activities that begin as personal writing can become interpersonal as children expand their focus and realize the implications of communication with others. Perhaps when language is interpersonal the writer begins to build a sense of how completely a message must be represented and how form must support function.

In a discussion about the sorts of activities or experiences that are necessary for children to learn to write, there is no mention of required skills but instead Pat and Rick speak mainly of affective

criteria. In their view it is response from an interested and accepting audience that fosters writing development. The parents state:

> Exposure to books of course. I think having people read to her was good. I think that's about all too! And exposure to pens and paper and an interest in looking at what she's produced on someone else's part too - to appreciate what has been done - but very little intervention before it was done. Basically the option (to try) being there and noticing and appreciating it after it's done. That spurred on more of it for sure.

The kinds of writing that Pat and Rick tend to do at home are very pragmatic and Erin's account of what her parents do is accurate. Lists of things that are needed for the animals, jobs to do, letters asking for information and replies to previous correspondence are a natural occurrence in this particular literate environment. While Erin could recall the sorts of things her parents wrote about, she did not however characterize her own very similar efforts as writing. The question then becomes one of what is the nature and the value of the role model provided at home? Perhaps it does not have immediate effects. Rick wonders aloud:

> And quite a bit of letter writing asking for information or dealing with a company, though how much she paid attention to that, I don't know. No, they're lying around the house. She would often find and read them. And the lists - the ever-present lists!

Pat and Rick try to recall early memories of what it was like to be a child learning to write. The mechanics, the physical skill, the protocols and teacher practices first present themselves. Comments like the following are typical of their reminscences:

> I remember I started cursive writing in grade three. Learning to use a pen, being able to use a pen when you could write neatly enough. I remember trying to fill out little sentences and blanks - it was in grade one or something like that. I also remember being in junior grades in Quebec and writing eight foolscap pages for one exam. I think there were expectations for the amount of written work. The volume was important for sure. Still is eh?

Toward the end of the first session the parents are given the opportunity to raise any issues that may have been overlooked or anything additional that the researcher ought to know. Pat admits to being surprised by Erin's developing definition of writing. She says:

> I'm really frankly surprised to hear Erin say writing as only being story writing. When Dave (the researcher) started talking about writing she immediately took it as story.

At this point Pat wonders whether this definition has its origin in schools and asks:

> Do they call it writing in schools or creative writing?

She then goes on to explain in some detail why it is that defining writing in terms of story is not appropriate for Erin. Pat has essentially a functional view of writing development, one that characterizes children involved in writing for real purposes with real audiences. She explains:

> I see it as a functional thing, as a tool for - I see the creative side as something that comes later. I see Erin still, in terms of creative writing, her best work is still a drawing. Her best way of getting a creative story across is to draw a really nice detailed drawing and maybe a few words that go with

> it. I see her use of writing still definitely in a functional level, one where I want to remind myself to do this so I'll write it down.

Pat recalls a conversation that she had with a consultant from the local school board in the previous year. Because Erin was not attending school, the home situation was monitored. The consultant wanted to see Erin's writing. Pat remembers:

> I remember Marg (the consultant) talking about what she had written; she definitely wanted stories. I'm surprised. She was interested in the other stuff but then she definitely wanted to see stories and at that point (nine months ago) we didn't have hardly any.

Perhaps this attention to writing as story relates closely to school instruction. When children need help in their writing, as will be seen in the teacher's account, they are given story starters. As Newkirk (1984) observes, "The road to literacy, they soon learn, is paved with narratives" (pp. 346).

While Pat admits to surprise at Erin's view, she nevertheless is accepting of her position. She confirms:

> I'm surprised to hear her call it just story writing, but then that's what she feels the term means.

It is obvious by now that Erin's parents are very observant. It seems that little of her development has escaped their notice. Pat mentions one very long story, "The Little Demon", that Erin has been working on for several months and it is in the context of this lengthy

narrative that Pat offers insights into Erin's story writing development that seem to run counter to what is proposed by James Britton (1970).

He postulates a model that distinguishes types of writing in terms of the functions which language may serve. Three types of writing are advanced: expressive, poetic and transactional. The conception of the expressive function of language occupies a central and beginning point in his account. While the poetic mode is more concerned with the form and qualities of language in writing and the transactional mode incorporates all the informative and persuasive uses of written language, Britton contends that in the earliest stages, beginning writers most naturally use what may be termed the expressive mode. Their early writing is relatively undifferentiated in function. In addition, Britton states that the primary starting point for young writers is the story. Pat says:

> I don't know when you come across doing that, when you can formulate - if she wants to write a story - perhaps it makes sense to make a plan first and then you can fill in from there. Until you get to that level, I don't see the creative writing; it's just beyond what her capabilities are. She needs to do a whole bunch of useful things that she sees the use for, that she gets pleasure out of first before she can do a big thing like that.

From this account it appears that expressive writing may develop from functional or transactional writing. In addition, given the wide variety of writing forms that Erin attempts, reservations about Britton's assumptions are legitimate.

The samples of Erin's and other children's writing were examined and some discussion ensued. Pat found it extremely difficult to comment on the pieces or to delineate what might constitute good writing or define

good writers. She indicates that children learn to write best by writing and hints that skills, while not mentioned directly, might develop best in context. Pat makes this comment as she examines the writing of a five year old:

> Well, the only way to do it is by doing more of that. The more they do of that, the next time he's going to spell it. He's going to have more - probably when he first - he obviously knows "is in the" and he knows "is going to". He knows a lot of those words. The more he writes those stories, next time he's going to know how to spell "boat" and "fall". No, I don't think he needs to know any more. I think he's written a great story.

Again Pat speaks with sensitivity about children's abilities:

> To the child, I'd be really hesitant to make any criticism at all.

The interview ends with a return to the "Demon" story that Erin had begun some months ago. Pat offers a nice account of the problems inherent in this particular piece of story. There is a dilemna here for both the author and the parent. Regardless of how the situation gets resolved Pat indicates that, consistent with all she has said to this point, she will remain supportive and appreciative of Erin's efforts:

> Well, it's definitely her epic, but she's flogging herself with it at this point - something she was very proud of when she was writing it. It was over her head in ability and never could finish it and therefore to try and finish it is a mistake for her at this point. I haven't said that to her but I think she's burnt out of that idea. The story was great, but I do feel the enjoyment has gone out of it for her - that if she finds it, she'll get in a bad mood trying to work on it. I wouldn't discourage her from adding anything to it. Then again, if she hadn't seen it for three months, and brought it out, read it

all over and got an idea, she might finish it up in fifteen minutes. We'll find it before Christmas when we do our calendars. It will be interesting to see what she does at this point.

That it would be interesting is perhaps an understatement!

4.3 The Teacher's View

Mrs. Fair, Erin's teacher indicates that there is considerable variety in the writing that her children do at school. She mentions the daily journal, the writing folders, writing connected with reading lessons, writing for research and reporting, poetry, newspaper articles, commercials, novel study follow-up and writing associated with interviews. Neither Erin nor her parents , in their accounts, seemed aware of the many different kinds of writing available to childern in Mrs. Fair's class. While there appears to be variety, the teacher quickly makes, as Erin has indicated earlier, a distinction among these forms and says of her practice:

> We have lots of different types of writing. Some of it's more formal; some of it's less formal than others. The children have a daily journal that they keep. It can be stories; it can be anything they want it to be. I do check it over once in a while. We have writing folders where we work on a theme or sort of a creative writing type of lesson that we are doing. They write a story and I correct, mark those from time to time. I don't mark every single one up with red but they get the idea that they will have to revise and copy certain ones of personal writing and make a good copy of that.

The children learn very quickly what is expected of them in terms of their writing. Formal presentation is important. That the journals are glanced at only occasionally says something of the importance that

the teacher might have for them. More attention is paid however to writing folder work where correcting and marking assume prominence.

The teacher also begins to allude in her initial account of writing in the classroom to the notions of audience and purposes for the writing. The question, as will be later seen in the analysis, becomes one of who determines the purposes for writing and for whom is the writing done?

In a discussion about writing content that might be seen in the folders, Mrs. Fair indicates that it is directed. While she feels that her input is of value to the children, she may in fact be removing ownership from the children. Their choice is really a matter of her choices. This comment illustrates the situation:

> It's more a - sometimes it's a directed lesson or a theme in class, for instance Thanksgiving. Last week we did one which was taken from a lesson situation where I had an overhead with a picture on it and they had three topics to choose from or they could branch out. I generally give them the option of doing anything with the picture that they would wish to plus suggested topics.

Several additional comments need to be made about the use of writing folders. The teacher points out that the folders are done usually weekly but depending on the amount of corrections to be made it may be more than a week until the child begins some new writing. This does not seem to be very many opportunities for children to develop skills and knowledge about the writing process. James Britton (1970), in support of children writing frequently, comments that a trickle can't be shaped, and Donald Graves (1983) has concluded that children can and indeed want to write daily.

That the teacher exerts some form of control of the writing from inception to presentation is indicated by this comment in which the children learn about the editing process in a somewhat vicarious manner:

> Probably a weekly situation. Sometimes a little bit more than a week, but it depends then if I'm editing them and they're going through that process of corrections and doing a good copy; then it takes a little longer. Maybe one week they'd be working on their rough copy and then editing process and then good copy.

The changes in writing that have occurred in the classroom since September are discussed. While Mrs. Fair is aware of the fact there is a wide range of abilities evident among the children, her expectations may not demonstrate this appreciation.

She gives an account of the fears that children have as they begin to write in her class and in doing so begins to develop a list of criteria to which young writers must eventually attend. An initial strategy that children have developed to cope with their anxiety is to write in what she describes as a safe manner. The teacher offers:

> There were some individuals who went from not knowing what to write, and being a little bit afraid to put things down, because of structural errors, spelling, sentence structure and so on. So they would be writing very safely, for example, "I see the dog. It is a nice day." - to writing more lengthy things and opening out a little bit without the fear of saying, "I can't spell that, so I won't write it."

The notion of the external standard that was the focus of discussion in earlier sections of the paper begins to assume a prominent position in Mrs. Fair's developing view of writing. She observes:

> They will at some point have to reckon with the spelling and the punctuation and so on. What I feel as they go on and become better spellers is that they will develop better structural tendencies, as well as saying, "Think about that word a little more; try to think of rhyming words; try to think of endings that you hear that we have had in spelling." I do teach formal spelling. I think it's important for children to recognize spelling patterns, groups of letters which go together, all this sort of structural pattern.

From the teacher's perspective, structural patterns are very important for beginning writers. If the child can somehow put these skill components together, writing development will occur. As to the possible sources of children's feelings of fear that might prevent them from writing, Mrs. Fair offers that she doesn't think anybody has deliberately made them feel that way. She states that children are aware of their deficits. She comments:

> I think most children recognize their capabilities and their shortcomings and I think that especially by the grade four level they realize they are not all that wonderful in spelling and writing or they have difficulty reading or whatever. They recognize they have difficulties. I think many times they have that knowledge, that feeling about themselves and they go from that. I think it's a self knowledge kind of thing. I don't think anybody has tried to make them feel that way.

As the teacher's view continues to develop it is apparent that children are being described from what might be termed a deficit perspective. The knowledge that beginning writers already possess and how that knowledge might be expanded in the context of writing are not described. How is it that children become conscious of what they don't know? In this case it may be that the significance of the knowledge and strategies that children are already using is overlooked and ignored. A

deficit view of ability may not assist children to build knowledge about written language.

In a dicussion of the kinds of activities and experiences that children need to help them with their writing, Mrs. Fair refers to conventions and mechanics in the context of story writing as important. She states:

> Certainly an awareness of sentence - where a sentence begins and ends, question marks, a certain amount of spelling. Skill as far as being able to attempt to write down a word, whether it is sounded put or something from spelling study. Prefixes, endings, whatever. As well as probably some recognition of how to do quotations. And the idea of a paragraph having a certain amount of unity to it. Developing beginning, middle, ending of a story. Lots of things like that.

She does however, expand her view of necessary experiences to include the role of children's background experiences. She feels that the children might have something to say, but that they do need stimulation and motivation to write it down. She has a responsibility to help the children express their thoughts. She observes:

> I think they have to have stimulation and motivation to do what they want to inside. They want to put things down and so I try to create sisuations where that takes place. You have to have something to write about and I think a lot of background things that children experience with families, with other people, in social relationships as well as being read to, being exposed to printed word probably give a lot of background from which to draw.

Mrs. Fair begins to discuss what she does when the children are busy with their writing and describes the nature of her involvement in the writing process. Her role during the journal writing is to suggest

various ways that children can begin their stories if they are having difficulty getting started. Other times she engages in writing notes and certificates for children. She occasionally prepares the next day's lesson plans. She says:

> I'll give them a few ideas to get them thinking more or less in the form of questions or, "Did you ever think of?" and, "Perhaps you might try", or, "Wouldn't it be fun to?" - to get them thinking along different lines because sometimes they just can't seem to get their thoughts collected enough or focused into one thing.

She indicates that she attempts to be busy during this writing time. Writing memos or happygram notes for children involve her. Mrs. Fair also corrects work during this time. If the notion of role model is considered, the teacher does not do what is expected of the children, that is, she does not write consistently, yet consistent effort is expected of the children. However, what she describes may in fact be the pragmatic nature of teacher writing in a classroom and Erin in her earlier observations may not have appreciated the diversity of the kinds of writing that teachers do. In addition, just how often teachers do show students how they would go about doing tasks similar to those given to students is open to conjecture.

Mrs. Fair then begins to talk about aspects of writing folder activity. The children are essentially in need of correct spellings when they are busy with their writing. She observes:

> I generally go around. Lots of times if it's a word that one child needs I'll go up quietly and put it on the board. That

gives them ideas. I don't tell them how to spell everything; I don't believe in having them come up for every single word.

As she continues her account of writing folder activity, Mrs. Fair indicates that quantity of writing may be a criterion for acceptable product in her class as opposed to quality or intent of the writing. This attention to quantity is described in terms of narrative story. She says, in a discussion of Christmas books that the children are currently making:

> When they are writing I'm there to help them or get them going. They'll come up with it all finished perhaps and they'll only have half a page and I'll say, "Well, you know, we're trying to fill, make a complete book; we've got several pages in the book and if you could perhaps add a second chapter to it or just when you think things are finished, there might be a turn of events and you can lead into another episode of what's happening." Just sort of encourage them to do more.

Mrs. Fair attaches importance to children becoming independent in their writing. She believes:

> They have to learn how to fend for themselves, be a little more responsible, independent at getting spelling out and doing thier best at putting together the sounds that they are hearing. Although there are some common words that will come up.

It is curious to note the difficult situation in which some children might find themselves. They have to learn independence, yet a considerable portion of the knowledge and opportunities necessary to actively construct meaning about the written system are in the control of the teacher. In a discussion about ways in which children help each other in class, Mrs. Fair indicates that there are restrictions on peer help, confirming Erin's earlier obsevation of teacher practice. She says:

> They're free to ask another child beside them if they do it quietly and if it isn't too interruptive. I insist on things being really quiet in the room so that people can think. I don't mind someone asking the next person how to spell as long as it isn't too disruptive. If it's a constant thing, I say, "Try it on your own a little bit more".

With perhaps the best of intentions and quite possibly without an awareness of the negative consequences, the teacher has established a situation where interaction is discouraged. While the children are expected to make independent attempts at writing, they still have to face the spectre of corrections and rewriting that characterize the finished product in this class.

But writing environments that encourage talk can help children to value the recursive nature of writing, that is, the on-going process of generating clarifying and elaborating ideas to discover operational truths about writing. Cazden (1981) claims that composing for young children is a social activity and is often a different process than that of adults who tend to compose alone and often in silence. Moss (1985), examining writing as a transaction among teachers and children, reports that teachers' instructional decisions may be the most important influence on children's writing processes in the classroom. Preliminary classroom observations of composing in a group setting seem to indicate that the writing task is facilitated, both qualitatively and quantitatively, when interaction among the children, teacher and the environment is encouraged (Coe, 1984).

Mrs. Fair provides a clear but moving account of her early memories of what it was like to be a child learning to write. She describes her feelings:

> I don't feel that I've always been a good writer; it's been a very difficult process for me and so I can sympathize with the kids who are having difficulty getting going. As a child, it was very important to have the spelling right. I always felt very pressured to have the spelling and the grammar correct.

Attention to conventions and the mechanics of presentation were important criteria for her as a child. Admitting that she was not a "terrific speller", she recalls how this emphasis discouraged the amount of writing that she did:

> I still felt that pressure that I had to have things looking right. So I don't feel the quantity of material that I wrote was very much because of being very self-conscious about having it spelled correctly. I probably shied away from writing more than I should have.

The language that Mrs. Fair uses to relate these experiences is powerful and in many ways ominous. She talks about the devastation she felt when the response to her writing was one of correction. She remembers:

> There were many times when I felt very compelled to write and loved to do stories about something I was highly motivated to do but I was always really disappointed when things came back so marked up that I was discouraged at times with my writing. I think it was not until I finished high school and was doing university work that I felt more comfortable writing although I always feel that I have to have someone edit it.

She still retains the belief that the author is not in control of their own writing and indicates a need for the security provided by some sort of external approval. About editing she states:

> I think it is a good feeling to have someone edit your work and look for a lot of little things. I don't feel threatened about that any more but as a child I did.

Her account of the sorts of writing she did as a child are strikingly similar to the recollections that Pat and Rick offer about their early memories. In addition, they are not unlike the kinds of things that both Erin and her parents report as being part of the present classroom curriculum! She relates:

> My writing as a child was more notes off the board, composing answers, specific comprehension answers in books, workbooks with reading. There were the odd creative assignments, but I don't know how creative they were.

Rick's earlier comment that there appeared to be an apparent contradiction in the term " forced creative writing", is echoed in kind by Mrs. Fair when she says:

> There were the odd creative assignments, but I don't know how creative they were.

The teacher's reminiscences constitute a provocative account of teacher practice. Past anxieties have become translated into current practices. While Mrs. Fair claims to be able to sympathize with those children who might be experiencing difficulty with their writing, she seems virtually helpless to change the present situation. And although she can articulate the disappointment that she felt as a young writer, she cannot empathize with her pupils or at least she has failed to translate her early experiences into useful practice.

Most traditional school language arts programs do not help students to develop a personal, functional need for being authors themselves of stories, poems, books, reports and other forms of writing. Quite possibly, the purpose of writing tasks that children encounter as they progress through school, from the child's point of view, is to satisfy an external demand and not an internal expressive or communicative need. Many school writing assignments involve either imaginary audiences or no explicit audiences at all. Furthermore, Goodman and Goodman (1983) believe that teachers have tended to be evaluators rather than audiences or respondents.

The researcher and the teacher begin to examine the samples of writing that were used in the interviews with the child and the parents. In a discussion of one of Erin's poems, the one about spring, the teacher casts the child as limited in ability. Mrs. Fair characterizes the writing as possibly being the safe sort that children often do. That it is presented well is a function of editing, good spelling and possibly even copying. While the structure is acceptable, the creative aspect is not. The teacher comments:

> Now this looks like as if it could be a poetry type lesson to get the children just sort of started with types of poetry. It may be a form, "spring is". It could also mean that the child is feeling very safe with putting, "spring is" and knowing that's a good beginning. It looks very correct as if it had been edited or possibly copied out of a book. The structure looks very correct with good spelling. The ideas involved, I wouldn't say it's particularly creative. I think a little bit more creative thought, a little bit more freedom (is necessary). If it was getting started at poetry writing that's fine; if you asked them to write about spring and this is all you came up with, it's a little limited.

In response to a piece of informational writing about a guitar, the teacher again offers it as an example of safe writing. While there are some good ideas in the piece, more variety in sentence structure is needed. There is also room for improvement if the piece were written as a story. Presentation is referred to once more. Mrs. Fair says:

> A lot of patterning here and they're getting to feel a little bit safe in (writing), "The guitar". Quite aware of sentence structure and probably that's fine for this point. They are ready to go on to a little more variety of sentence structure and how to say things a little differently as far as not always starting the same. The ideas are very good. There's room for a little bit more fantasy. It looks like a copy that has been edited.

One of the bits of writing is a book written in four chapters by a six year old. It is an exciting narrative. Mrs. Fair in her assessment of it indicates in her comments her preference for a particular type of writing, that of the story. Of the adventure story she observes:

> There are a lot of ideas. As you get into it, more ideas on the actual story, what's happening, who said what. Carrying the idea of a story along, developing a story - beginning, middle and ending ideas.

The teacher examines another piece of Erin's writing, this time a descriptive piece about space. She feels that some editing must have been done on the writing because the spelling is correct. In addition, creativity is lacking. Mrs. Fair comments:

> It looks as though some editing was done on this. They could possibly have written it out before. It looks like the spelling is really wonderful for an eight year old. From the view of

> content, getting ideas, it's very factual. It could be more creative.

A final sample is examined. Skills, mechanics and spelling are all things that are just beyond the grasp of this young author who is characterized as using "the safe sentence building tool" as it has now come to be called. The teacher offers:

> He's using the "I am" safe sentence building tool at this point. He's, as far as getting down words, sort of inventing the spelling of things. As he goes along he'll probably get more of a grip on letter combinations and spellings and things, word attack skills. He probably needs some more work on letters, working with words, getting used to patterns words have.

There are several issues that are common to each of the teacher's assessments of what appear to be different pieces of writing. Very little information about what the child already knows and is demonstrating in the writing is discussed; instead there is a plethora of conventional sorts of things that need to be learned. The quality of ideas present in the writing receives little attenion with the exception that the ideas are described as lacking in imagination. A piece becomes acceptable to the extent that the ideas add to the writing as a story. The intent of the writer is rarely questioned. Does the teacher appreciate other forms of writing? Absent also is any discussion that might indicate the role of writing in the development of understanding.

It is curious also that when the writing of a particular child is being discussed, the teacher often refers to the plural form "they". The issue might be raised that this use of the plural form may, in some way, reflect or be indicative of the teacher's expectations for all children.

Mrs. Fair completes the interview with some summary observations about writing. It is to be seen as unique for each child with correspondingly unique expectations. The teacher's task is to somehow balance maintaining the integrity of the child with the responsibility to pass on certain necessary knowledge. She concludes:

> Writing is a very personal and individual thing with children and that the expectations are different. What one child is doing is not necessarily what the other should be doing at the very same time. They're just not ready to do it. I think that a child should always feel good about what they've written and have an opportunity to share if they want to. I think it's necessary for children to have pointers on how to improve as well without marking every single thing up that they turn out. So we go through things like that (suggestions for improvement), lots of times and we discuss them in class before they write or I remind them, "While you're writing please think about these other things." Perhaps they're at the point where they're doing more punctuation, as far as quotation marks are concerned and paragraphing, then we get into that. I don't try to lay the whole thing on them at once; they develop it a little at a time. So I think atmosphere, feeling motivated to do it, feeling a freedom, without someone saying, "That thought is no good because it isn't spelled correctly." Okay?

With the very best of intentions, this is indeed a delicate balancing act!

5. WHOSE VIEW ANYWAY?

At this point in the paper it may perhaps be presumptuous for the researcher to attempt to draw further conclusions about the nature of the relationships that might exist among the three views that have just been presented. To a large extent the descriptions should stand on their own merit, free of any further judgements by the researcher.

To be sure the descriptions do raise a number of issues that assume importance in the context of any discussion about the writing process.

Some issues relate to knowledge and understanding, while others relate to instruction. Some consider social interaction. Still others are connected to child development. It seems then, both opportune and courteous to allow the reader, having been guided through the rather detailed descriptions of each of the participants' views of writing, to begin to make connections among these views.

Just as the child, the teacher and the parents are operating from a particular orientation and giving voice to their own unique perceptions of a common process, so to is the researcher. As Giroux (1978) notes, the researcher is, and indeed cannot avoid, using a unique frame of reference within which to interpret the data that have been collected. Any useful discussion then of the relationships that might exist among the views of the three participants in the study needs to include some link to the researcher's perspective as evidenced by what is written.

The area under investigation and the kinds of information that are considered to be relevant to it are linked to the researcher's belief or value system. The interests that are embedded in such a system will influence the researcher to focus on some things and to discount others. The set of information that a researcher uses in turn will inform the types of hypotheses, organizing ideas, statements or themes that are proposed.

Some hypotheses or organizing ideas may never be considered by a researcher because the set of information is not conducive to raising certain possibilities. Even a researcher's use of evidence will be influenced by the frame of reference. While purporting to be objective, the researcher may search for evidence in the data that in fact does not

exist. On the other hand, evidence that could contradict a researchers position may be overlooked or interpreted in a manner supportive of the claim.

This argument is advanced not to lessen in any way the impact of the preceeding analysis, but rather to attempt to clarify the researcher's position. While an account of the researcher's beliefs about writing would occupy considerable space, it should nevertheless be apparent that there are certain principles that have provided a framework within which the accounts of the three participants have been analyzed. These include the belief that early written language efforts are an important yet often overlooked phase of early reading and writing development. That young writers write for a variety of purposes, using a variety of forms is a part of this perspective. Child-organized and created text, in the context of a supportive environment is an important aspect. Likewise the notion of active construction of writing knowledge by children is appreciated. Finally, a literate interactive environment, where children help each other and are helped by adults to discover operational truths about writing, contributes to this perspective.

These notions can be applied to daily life as well as to academic disputes. What might then be interpreted as differences in or relationships among views of writing may in fact be simply conversations about slightly different subjects, with each of the participants referring to different sets of information, interpreting the facts and forming opinions differently. Further interconnections that might exist among the views and the extent to which the child is influenced by the

coincidental perceptions of both the parents and the teacher are perhaps better left to the reader's speculation.

6. LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Descriptive studies describe or delineate characteristics or properties of a phenomenon, the intention being to accurately describe the nature of and the relationships among events. As a result of the present study, insights into the nature of the world views of writing of a nine year old child, her teacher and her parents have been gained. That these findings are not applicable beyond the parameters of the relationships that have been suggested must be considered. However, certain aspects of these interconnections warrant further research attention.

For example, it may be that the child-parent view of writing is similar prior to the child entering school. This convergent view may be maintained during early schooling and diverge as the child grows older, becoming increasingly consistent with the teacher's. Further ethnographic research may point to changes and developments in view over time for one or more of the participants. Still other research may wish to examine views of children at various specific ages.

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